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REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE FORUM ON THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Geneva, 21-22 July 1999

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INTRODUCTION

1. In 1997, the General Assembly, in its resolution 52/187 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, decided to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2001. In resolution 53/182, it designated the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the Secretary-General of the Conference and requested him to make all necessary preparations for the Conference.

2. As part of that preparatory process, a Consultative Forum was established by the Secretary-General of the Conference, comprising representatives of the United Nations system and other international organizations, member States and the private sector. Its first meeting was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 21 to 22 July 1999. The meeting was opened by Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD and of the Conference, and chaired by Mrs. Anna K. Tibaijuka, UNCTAD Special Coordinator for LDCs and Executive Secretary of the Conference. The meeting had before it a note prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat entitled "Preparatory process for the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries" *(UNCLDC/III/1)*.

I. OPENING STATEMENTS

3. Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD and of the Third LDC Conference, said that the main functions of the Forum were to provide an opportunity for the least developed countries (LDCs), their development partners, United Nations agencies, civil society and the business community to exchange views on the conceptual framework of the Conference, its objectives and organizational aspects and on the intergovernmental preparatory process. He noted that inter-agency consultations and coordination, together with meetings of intergovernmental preparatory committees and expert groups, had played an important role in ensuring the successful preparation for the first and second United Nations Conferences on LDCs. Looking back, however, it would appear that the preparatory process for both previous Conferences had not involved all the potential stakeholders in a manner that would have enabled them to have a sense of direct ownership of the Programmes of Action adopted by the Conferences. That might have been one of the reasons accounting for the feeble follow-up process at various levels. In order to improve on this, therefore, the full involvement of all relevant actors in their own respective areas of competence and comparative advantages should be ensured from the outset. The Forum represented an important way of contributing to this objective. A wide spectrum of actors ought to be given an opportunity to acquire a sense of involvement in the preparatory process and the final outcome and to commit themselves to carry out their respective responsibilities arising from the Conference.

4. The substantive agenda for the Conference was broad, since the Conference concerned the overall sustainable socio-economic development of LDCs. In order to make progress, however, it was advisable to identify critical areas and set priorities, and not to attempt to solve all the problems at once. Efforts and resources should be directed at solving the most critical development bottlenecks first. In this regard, the Conference secretariat would rely heavily on the Forum□s advice in setting the right priorities and perspectives and in ensuring the maximum mobilization worldwide on behalf of LDCs. The situation of some LDCs was made particularly

difficult by what Mr. Ricupero called the most perverse combinations of economic regression; the virtual disappearance of the State; civil war; violence; massive violations of human rights; and in some cases, even genocide.

5. While underdevelopment was the common element in all LDCs, each country still had its own national peculiarities, potential and opportunities. To be meaningful and effective, a global programme of action needed to be based on country-level assessments of constraints, priorities and opportunities. For this reason, the Conference should include a comprehensive and extensive preparatory process at country level which should involve interministerial departments, civil society organizations, the private sector and local government representatives. An open and participatory preparation at country level would lead to the formulation of a relevant and legitimate national-level comprehensive programme of action for each country. This would become the basis for formulating an umbrella global programme of action, to be agreed upon at the Conference. The Conference secretariat was seeking suggestions on the best way to organize these country-based activities from other Forum participants, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, which had field representation and experience in dialogue with development partners.

6. One of the reasons why the previous programmes of action had had limited success was that they were not accompanied by sufficiently specific resource commitments. Thus, the securing of resources for the implementation of the new comprehensive programme of action to be agreed on at the Conference was the major challenge. New approaches for mobilizing development finance needed to be found, along with ways in which the present debt liability could be turned into an asset.

7. Mr. Ricupero invited the Forum to be innovative and daring in considering all the issues before it and assured participants of his personal engagement and commitment to this process.

8. Ms. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Secretary of the Conference and Chairperson of the Forum, introduced the note prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat (UNCLDC/III/1) on the preparatory process for the Conference. She stated that some of the steps and activities in that preparatory process were mandated by the General Assembly and that it might be difficult to depart from them. On the other hand, there was more flexibility as to some of the other arrangements and as to the substantive content and focus of the Conference. The secretariat would rely on the collective views of all stakeholders in the process, and that was where the Forum could make an important contribution.

II. GENERAL DEBATE

9. The representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the associated countries of Cyprus and Malta, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries and members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the European Union was fully committed to the least developed countries and stood ready to make the necessary efforts to contribute not only to the logistical organization of the Conference but to its substantive agenda as well. The EU intended to participate fully in the debate to formulate

new strategies and an action plan for the sustainable development of the LDCs for the years up to 2010. The Union and its member States were among the first donors of official development assistance (ODA) and would continue to be active in that field, despite budgetary constraints. In addition, the EU market was very open to exports from LDCs, the majority of which were signatories of the Lomé Convention and benefited from free access to the EU market for their exports, and also comprised the main market for their exports.

10. It was important to identify critical areas and set priorities for the Conference. That task should be based on a thorough analysis of past experience, so that the Conference could deal with critical issues in a way that would make a true difference for LDCs. The European Union appreciated the integrated approach reflected in the secretariat paper of linking the future programme of action with resources to implement it. The secretariat's proposals for the preparatory process were interesting and needed to be further discussed. The Forum should consider the projected achievements of the Conference in an informal and creative manner, and in particular, the strategic issues on which the preparatory process should focus. He also emphasized the importance of considering how to create a dynamic preparatory process and how both LDCs and donor countries could be fully involved in a true partnership.

11. The representative of Bangladesh, speaking also in his capacity as Coordinator of the Least Developed Countries, emphasized the important role the Forum could play in supporting the preparatory process for the Conference, a process whose success the LDCs were fully committed to ensuring. On several occasions the LDCs had expressed disappointment over the modest outcome of past commitments, essentially because of lack of resources. It was therefore important for the Third Conference not to be seen as just another event; it should instead result in feasible, tangible, measurable and action-oriented commitments. It should integrate the outcomes of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference, UNCTAD X, the Millennium Assembly, and the South Summit. While focusing on critical areas, the agenda of the Conference should remain open. The Comprehensive New Plan of Action for Integrating LDCs into the Global Economy adopted in June 1999 by LDCs in Sun City, South Africa, reflected the serious efforts under way. The plethora of programmes of actions and initiatives in favour of LDCs meant that their development partners needed to have a single focused vision which would help LDCs to unlock their development constraints and enhance their insertion into the global economy.

12. The representative of Belgium expressed his country's appreciation for the choice of Brussels as the venue for the Third LDC Conference and assured the EU and UNCTAD of Belgium's full support in all practical and organizational matters. The big challenge facing the preparatory process was to convince all stakeholders that there would not be a succession of bold statements followed by a return to business as usual. If LDCs' development was really a priority for the world community, then strong and decisive action was the only possible answer. A renewed commitment, which might reasonably be expected as an outcome of the Third Conference, was more likely to have concrete effects if based on pragmatic and measurable objectives. In that respect he welcomed the idea of preparing country-specific programmes of action and emphasized the importance of establishing effective delivery mechanisms. Without ignoring the importance of financing for development, the Conference should not reduce the predicament of the LDCs to the single problem of lack of financial resources. Closely interlinked with the issue of resources were policies. Additional donor funding would be easier to attract if it was supplementary to national efforts. LDCs, however meagre their domestic

resources, could show the right way by giving priority to investment and development, good governance, respect for basic human rights and poverty reduction. He welcomed the intention to involve all stakeholders in the preparatory process, which would ensure a sense of ownership and commitment to carrying out responsibilities arising from the Conference.

13. The representative of the European Commission outlined the advantages of hosting the Third Conference on LDCs in Brussels. With more than 800 journalists worldwide accredited to the European institutions, the "Capital of Europe" could provide excellent coverage of the Conference, which would in turn contribute to increasing global awareness of the vulnerabilities and problems facing the LDCs. The appealing proximity of Belgium's neighbour, France, as the organizer of the two previous Conferences and a member of the EU, was highlighted. The objective was to organize the Conference to attain practical and operational outcomes that could be effectively followed up at the global, regional, national and sectoral levels. In line with the global spirit of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the substantive agenda of the Conference should include a discussion on the need for developing countries, and particularly the least developed ones, to secure a share in the growth of international trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development. Agreeing with the thrust of the June 1999 Sun City meeting that the LDCs must prepare their position in view of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference, he referred to the changes that had taken place since the adoption in Paris of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s, especially the realities of the new multilateral trading system. The upcoming Conference should take this new scenario into account and focus on the development of LDC export capacities in goods and services, because the simple elimination of barriers and the improvement of access to developed markets was not sufficient. Donors should take into consideration the progress made on their cooperation in the context of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and of the World Bank□s Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), and the evolution of foreign debt initiatives in favour of highly indebted poor countries. The ideas put forward at the Third LDC Conference should be reconciled with the best practice of international donors and with the conclusions, recommendations and action plans of recent United Nations world conferences (including those on environment and development, population and development, women, and human rights) and their respective evaluation exercises five years later. European Commission delegations in the LDCs were willing to help with country-level preparations.

14. The representative of Sweden recalled his country's strong and long-standing commitment to the cause of LDCs and multilateral cooperation. Sweden would therefore contribute actively to the preparatory process for the Conference and to the Conference itself. He emphasized the importance of focusing on poor people in LDCs. Actions and options to be considered should be those which had the most direct impact on poor people. The Third Conference on LDCs, which would follow a number of important global events, would have to be a new kind of conference, resulting in a tangible, measurable and action-oriented outcome. He emphasized the importance of involving all the actors in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself.

15. The representative of the WTO said that the marginalization of LDCs reflected an unacceptable social and economic situation; without urgent action on their behalf, that marginalization would increase further. By the time the Conference took place, therefore, it

would be necessary to show that something concrete and effective was being done to change the situation and create conditions for durable and sustainable development in the LDCs. Producing favourable trade conditions was one essential aspect of these efforts. He recalled the proposal made by the former Director-General of WTO in 1996 to seek bound, duty-free access for all products imported from LDCs. This had borne some fruit, but in a limited manner only. Much more needed to be done. Generalized system of preferences (GSP) treatment lacked the stability of a binding commitment, and many sensitive products were excluded. The LDCs as a whole accounted for less than 0.05 per cent of international exports. They therefore represented a threat to no one, and there should be no reason for holding back on that initiative. While the market access initiative sought to create stable and liberal demand conditions for exports, the integrated framework for trade-related technical assistance adopted by the 1997 WTO high-level meeting on LDCs sought to help the supply response by easing capacity constraints and providing assistance at the country level which could promote trade-related growth and development. Many WTO members had flagged the issue of trading conditions for LDCs as being achievable at the Seattle Ministerial Conference. If that actually happened, it would give a boost to LDCs' trade potential and make an important contribution to pulling the LDCs out of the downward spiral in which they had been caught.

16. The representative of UNDP saw the Conference as a unique opportunity to galvanize the international community around the problems facing the LDCs and to build a partnership between donors and LDCs in order to reverse the increasing marginalization of the latter during the past two decades. UNDP endorsed the secretariat□s approach of focusing on concrete programmatic work at the country level and stressed the bottom-up approach, which ensured that the programme of action to be presented to the Conference would be deeply rooted in the realities and priorities of the LDCs. He further welcomed the initiative of involving all stakeholders, including Governments, the business community and civil society. The Conference should be a time to look ahead in order to develop a national vision of development around which the different social groups could build a consensus. UNDP allocated 85 per cent of its core resources to poor countries, including the LDCs. He conveyed his organization's commitment to assist in the country-level preparations and in setting up round tables. The Comprehensive Plan of Action endorsed at Sun City was a pertinent example of what could be done in the preparatory process. UNDP continued to believe that the issue of governance was essential for LDCs and for their growth.

17. The representative of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) said that, although great strides had been made in the past few years by the United Nations and by the ICC in establishing a closer working relationship, scepticism seemed to linger as to the real contribution business could make to the type of activities covered by the Conference. The ICC supported the general approach of the Forum, aimed at results that were tangible, feasible and measurable. It was working closely with UNCTAD on development issues, particularly in African LDCs, by helping to prepare investment guides in collaboration with the national chambers of commerce that would strengthen local businesses and educate service facilitators. The idea was to bring the LDCs closer to both the development process and the multilateral process.

18. The representative of the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) stated that all actors should address the problems of the LDCs on the basis of past achievements or lack thereof, as

that could be a decisive factor as to what plan of action should be adopted for the next 10 years. A case study should be undertaken of developed countries and the reasons for their failure to meet their commitments.

19. The Coordinator of the Non-Governmental Liaison Service said that the upcoming Conference presented a great opportunity to integrate civil society as a key stakeholder in the preparatory process. As regarded the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the process, in addition to NGOs from the North, appropriate NGOs from the South, and LDCs themselves, should make their presence felt and could serve as focal points to disseminate information.

III. CONCLUSIONS

A. Preparatory process

20. The Meeting discussed the various aspects and steps of the preparatory process, as outlined in the secretariat note (UNCLDC/III/1) and as presented by the Executive Secretary of the Conference. The main conclusions follow.

21. On general matters, participants unanimously supported the emphasis on the country-based bottom-up approach. LDC Governments should have the central role. The involvement of members of civil society, including the private sector and NGOs, was essential, at both the international and country levels. It was also important to assess why previous LDC conferences had not been as successful as expected. What actions should have been taken by the LDCs and by donors, and why? The outcome of the Conference should be feasible, tangible, measurable and action-oriented.

Consultative Forum

22. Besides Bangladesh, as Coordinator of the LDCs, other LDC representatives would be invited to present more first-hand experiences, with the exact details to be agreed after consultation with the LDC group. The DAC should be invited to the Forum. Participation of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the LDCs (OSCAL) was confirmed. Participation of NGOs, including the NGO liaison committee in Brussels and NGOs from the South, was envisaged, with more consultation to take place on this matter. The ICC would represent the private sector, but a separate meeting with a broader private sector group was planned.

23. Participants felt that, to the extent possible, Forum meetings should operate on the principle of informal exchanges and brainstorming, rather than on the delivery of prepared statements. Reports on Forum meetings should be widely circulated. The date and venue for the next meeting was left to the Chair.

Consultation with civil society

24. The business sector and civil society, including NGOs from the South and academia, had an important role to play in the country-level preparations as well as in the Forum and other international preparatory activities. At the Conference itself, in view of the large number of potential participants and given the intergovernmental nature of the event, the participation of members of civil society and the business sector would be more effectively organized outside the main Conference, and in parallel with it. NGO participation from the South should be specifically encouraged.

Advocacy and promotion

25. The Secretary-General of the United Nations should invite former President Mandela to act as Goodwill Ambassador. The meeting welcomed the initiatives taken by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh in raising LDC issues in major forums and recommended that she continue her efforts, particularly by addressing the Group of Eight meetings. Other eminent persons (e.g. Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, George Soros) should also be approached to give support. Youth and business events, concerts and the like should be envisaged. The press corps covering the EU in Brussels should be fully utilized. A communications strategy should be developed in consultation with the Department of Public Information (DPI).

Country-level preparations

26. The EU and UNDP indicated their willingness to assist Governments in the preparatory process. It was hoped that other entities with field presence, and in particular the World Bank, would also provide assistance. The involvement of civil society, including the private sector, NGOs and academia, was important. Obtaining a fully participatory process in certain LDCs where democratic institutions were not well developed would be problematic. Although LDC Governments should have the final say, they might need to be briefed and motivated to do country-level preparations; pre-commitments by donors would provide encouragement. The secretariat should make available to LDCs guidelines on the structure and format of a typical national programme of action. Two or three national programmes should be undertaken at an early stage. Each LDC would be free to identify its own constraints and opportunities within the guidelines, state its own priorities and options, and explain its own vision and policies.

27. The national programmes would be different from the documentation presented at the UNDP round tables or World Bank consultative groups, in that they would cover a period of 10 years. These national 10-year programmes should make full use of available national long-term strategies or Vision 2020 statements. These broader perspectives could guide subsequent meetings of the round tables and consultative groups, which have a shorter horizon.

28. On the country-specific round tables and extraordinary round table meetings (EORTs) envisaged in paragraph 32 of the background note on the Conference by the UNCTAD secretariat (UNCLDC/III/1), different views on the nature and timing of these events were

expressed. It was agreed that the national programmes needed some form of endorsement by developing partners. However, some participants thought that the secretariat's proposals to expect donors to make commitments at the country-specific round tables or EORTs would be difficult to achieve in practice in many LDCs prior to the Conference. It might be possible to organize some country-level specific events at the Conference itself.

Regional expert meetings

29. Regional expert meetings are mandated by the General Assembly. They will not be confined to trade and investment but will address all issues, including an assessment of the previous two conferences.

Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee

30. The first meeting of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee (IPC) is planned for September 2000 and the second part by April 2001. In addition to feedback from the country preparatory process, the IPC should be provided with an analysis from the donor side of the difficulties encountered in meeting commitments to LDCs under previous programmes. OECD/DAC members should be requested to undertake a self-examination on this issue.

Sectoral, thematic and country-specific round tables

31. Thematic meetings could take place at the Conference itself. The following were among the themes to be addressed:

- An assessment of the impact of special measures in favour of LDCs;

- Financing for development (including debt conversion, foreign direct investment (FDI), capital flight, and domestic resource mobilization). This should be linked to the United Nations conference on the same topic, also scheduled for 2001. The conclusions of the 1999 Addis Ababa meeting of African Ministers of Finance and Planning should be taken into account as well;

- Capacity-building and institutional reform in LDCs.

Links with other events

32. Other forthcoming events and conferences would provide an opportunity for links with the Conference (and should bring together many worldwide themes) and a possible source of competition for attention. These included WTO, 1999; UNCTAD X, 2000; review of the Barbados Programme of Action, 1999; the five-year mid-term reviews of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women; the Conference on International Migration, Development and Integration (Stockholm, September 1999); the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development, 2001; review of the World Summit

for Children, 2001; and work of the Commonwealth on small States. The Conference secretariat was requested to obtain from the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) secretariat a full list of events with which the Conference could be linked. The mid-2001 political environment prevailing among major development partners of LDCs would need to be carefully monitored.

The Conference

33. The Conference will be held in Brussels at a date to be determined between April and June 2001. Consultations on logistical matters are ongoing between the EU and UNCTAD.

Resources for the preparatory process and for the Conference

34. It was noted that, given the limited United Nations regular budget allocation, substantial extrabudgetary resources for preparations and for the Conference itself urgently need to be mobilized.

35. A budget has been prepared and submitted to the European Union for consideration. The EU expressed its willingness to consider providing support as both a host and a donor. More information will be available in September 1999. UNDP would be prepared to assist, particularly with country-level preparations, together with other organizations with field representatives.

36. Pending a definitive decision by the EU, as a matter of urgency, the secretariat was invited to seek extrabudgetary resources from bilateral donors and other sources, so as not to lose momentum.

B. Substantive issues

Introduction

37. The Meeting considered the substantive agenda for the Conference to be broad, as the Conference is about the overall sustainable socio-economic development of LDCs. However, there was general agreement on the need to identify critical areas and to set priorities, in order to invest efforts and resources into attacking the most critical bottlenecks first. This should be based on a thorough analysis of past experience and country situations. Both the preparatory process and the Conference itself should produce a feasible, tangible, measurable and action-oriented outcome.

38. The discussion on the substantive issues to be addressed by the Conference was based on the tentative list of constraints and themes identified in the note prepared by the secretariat (UNCLDC/III/1, paras. 11-14) and presented by the Executive Secretary of the Conference, as well as on a presentation to the Forum by Mr. Jack Stone, former Director of UNCTAD's Special Programme for LDCs.

Main themes and issues

39. In the light of the discussions, the following areas and themes which could constitute elements for the core substantive agenda for the Conference were identified:

(a) Domestic resource mobilization;

(b) External resource mobilization (ODA, technical assistance, South-South cooperation, FDI, debt relief, reversing capital flight), including formal agreements on targets for LDCs;

(c) Trade issues, market access and supply capacity for goods and services, including the role played by migrant remittances and the integration of LDCs into the multilateral trading system;

(d) Poverty reduction and social safety nets;

(e) Investment in education (including retention of trained manpower), health and infrastructure;

(f) Good governance, democratization, human rights and gender issues; and

(g) Integrated national and regional development.

40. The following issues were also proposed as meriting inclusion in the clusters of issues to be considered during the preparatory process:

(a) Peace and development: the plight of a number of LDCs which are suffering from civil strife and political instability called for a special set of policies and measures;

(b) Appropriate macroeconomic policies, including fair income distribution, creation of a favourable environment for private sector development, attraction of investment, both domestic and foreign, ODA management and institutional reforms;

(c) Support to LDCs' efforts in disaster mitigation, preparedness and prevention; and

(d) Access to information, and information technology.

41. A number of issues, including good governance, corruption, debt and capital flight, would have to be looked at from the perspective and in the light of the responsibility of both the LDCs and their development partners.

42. Some of the issues mentioned above were considered to be applicable to LDCs and their development partners across-the-board, while others were country-specific. Consequently, in

order to be meaningful and effective, a global programme of action in favour of LDCs would need to be based on country-level assessments of constraints, priorities and opportunities. The secretariat should arrange for three to five country studies to be conducted on an immediate and pilot basis, which would pave the way for country-level preparations in other LDCs.

43. The meeting emphasized the need, in addition to support measures, for a new approach and a "new mind set" by LDCs if they are to improve the chances of reversing the current marginalization in the global economy.

44. The Conference secretariat was encouraged to undertake a rigorous assessment of the benefits or lack thereof which have accrued to LDCs as a result of their LDC status.

45. It was noted that policies should be judged by their effects in practice. In this regard, studies should be undertaken on best practices which had been implemented in LDCs.

46. While emphasizing that the LDC Conference should not be solely limited to the problem of the lack of financial resources, participants felt there could be no discussion on the development of LDCs without touching on the question of funding, including comprehensive debt relief - an area in which, despite recent initiatives, much remained to be done. The Meeting therefore emphasized the critical role of ODA in the development of LDCs and stressed the importance of reaffirming aid targets and working towards an increase in the provision of ODA for LDCs. However, the need to ensure that the overall approach to the substantive preparations for the Conference is not donor-centred was stressed. It was therefore important to identify areas where ODA is absolutely necessary and can have an effective impact. ODA should not be the fuel, but the lubricant for the engine. An assessment should be done of the implementation of commitments undertaken by the LDCs' development partners in past programmes of action, and a study undertaken of the constraints which limited the ability of their development partners fully to honour the commitments. This should take the form of a self-assessment by OECD/DAC members.

47. A review of targets set in favour of LDCs should be conducted, and the possibility explored of moving from the present best-endeavour practices to making targets binding, similar to the WTO commitments.

48. In the area of trade, the main problems were considered to be on the supply side, but more remained to be done with regard to market access. The two are intricately linked and need to be addressed simultaneously.

49. Questions on migration and labour mobility were considered important for LDCs. In the context of globalization, improved mobility conditions contribute to the progress of the societies and economies of both the sending and the receiving countries. Among the benefits to LDCs were improvement to the balance of payments and resource mobilization through expatriate transfers.

50. The need to learn from the experience of the implementation of programmes of action adopted by major global conferences and their mid-term reviews was emphasized. Thematic clusters should be selected in a manner which would ensure the inclusion of findings from other global events and conferences preceding the Third United Nations Conference on LDCs.

51. The Meeting noted that a number of initiatives and programmes take note of the needs of LDCs and purport to adopt measures in their favour, many of them in the form of rhetoric, and there is therefore a need for drawing up a coherent and focused programme of action that will incorporate all these initiatives in a single broader framework.

52. The Meeting exchanged views on the historical evolution of the list of the least developed countries and the criteria used to designate them as such. The question is at present under consideration by CDP and the Economic and Social Council. For the purposes of the preparatory process for the Conference, the list of LDCs will be taken as it stands at present and at the time of the onference. It was not recommended that the Conference itself should deal with these matters.

ANNEX I

Programme of work

Wednesday, 21 July

10:00-10:15	Opening address by Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD and of the Third Conference
10:15-10:45	Presentation by Ms. Anna K. Tibaijuka, Executive Secretary of the Third Conference
10:45-10:50	Adoption of the agenda
10:50-13:00	General debate
15:00-18:00	Discussion of the preparatory process

- The Consultative Forum - its role, composition, work programme and future meetings
- Role of and consultations with civil society (NGOs, private sector, academia, etc.)
- Advocacy and promotion (DPI, high-level personalities, "Goodwill Ambassador")
- Country-level preparations:

  Preparation of country-specific programmes of action; National Preparatory Committees; link with EORT proposal
- Regional expert meetings: participation, topics, time and output
- Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee: terms of reference
- Sectoral, thematic and country-specific round tables
- Links with other events
- The Conference itself
- Resources for the preparatory events and the Conference

Thursday, 22 July

10:00-13:00	Discussion of substantive issues – Presentation by Mr. Jack Stone on the "Substantive agenda for a New and Comprehensive Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of LDCs in the Third Millennium" – Exchange of views, covering the issues raised by Mr. Stone - development constraints faced by LDCs; and priority issues and themes to be covered by the Conference
15:00-16:00	Discussion of substantive issues (continued)
16:00-17:30	Summary of main points arising from the discussion, including work programme and timetable

ANNEX II

Documentation

1. The Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries. The Least Developed Countries and Action in their Favour by the International Community (A/CONF.104/2/Rev.1)

2. Paris Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (UNCTAD/RDP/LDC/58)

3. Report of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, New York, 25 September-6 October 1995 (TD/B/LDC/GR/8)

4. General Assembly Resolution 52/187: Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (A/RES/52/187)

5. General Assembly Resolution 53/182: Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s (A/RES/53/182)

6. The Least Developed Countries 1998 Report (UNCTAD/LDC (1998))

7. Integrating Least Developed Countries into the Global Economy: Proposals for a Comprehensive New Plan of Action in the Context of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference - As adopted at the Coordinating Workshop for Senior Advisors to Ministers of Trade in LDCs held in Sun City, South Africa, 21-25 June 1999 (LDC/CW/SA/6)

8. World Trade Organization (1997). The High-level Meeting on Integrated Initiatives for Least Developed Countries' Trade Development: Report of the Meeting (WT/COMTD/12)

9. World Trade Organization (1999). The Challenge of Integrating LDCs into the Multilateral Trading System (WT/GC/W/251)

ANNEX III

Attendance

1. The following States were represented at the Meeting:

Bangladesh (Coordinator of LDCs)
Belgium
Finland
Luxembourg
Sweden

2. The following intergovernmental organization was represented at the Meeting:

European Community

3. The following specialized agencies and related organization were represented at the Meeting:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
World Bank
International Monetary Fund
World Trade Organization

4. The Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Committee for Development Policy were represented at the Meeting. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO was also represented at the Meeting.

5. The following non-governmental organization was represented at the Meeting:

General Category

International Chamber of Commerce

6. The following resource person attended the Meeting: Mr. Jack Stone, Former Director, Special Programme for LDCs.